DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 231 206 FL 013 809

AUTHOR Burt, Andy
TITLE Immersion francaise precoce. Early French Immersion: Administrator's Resource Book.
INSTITUTION British Columbia Dept. of Education, Victoria. Div. of Public Instruction.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 39p.; For related documents, see FL 013 793-808.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Guides; Elementary Education; Enrollment; *French; *Immersion Programs; Parent School Relationship; Personnel; *Program Administration; Reference Materials; Research Reports, Resource Materials; Scheduling; School Organization
IDENTIFIERS *British Columbia

ABSTRACT

This handbook (in English) is part of a series of early French immersion program teaching guides--all written in French--and is designed to serve as a guide for administrators in schools with classes of students who are being instructed in French for a large part of their school program. It addresses itself to areas of concern which are unique to schools with French immersion programs. The guide deals specifically with four issues: staffing; scheduling and time allotments; enrollment of students; and administration of the program with regard to curriculum, professional development, evaluation, and reporting. An appendix presents an organization plan for a French immersion program based on one school's experience. A second appendix presents "Research Findings from French Immersion Programs across Canada: A Parents' Guide," by Jim Cummins. (AMH)

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Modern Languages Services Branch
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Ministère de l'Éducation
Division de l'Instruction Publique
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Early French Immersion
Immersion française précoce

FL013809

Administrator's Resource Book

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Published by **PRINT SERVICES**, *Ministry of Education, British Columbia* 1981 08

Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Education gratefully acknowledges the professional work of the members of the Early Immersion revision committee in preparing this guide:

Andy Burt
Bill Hay
Paule Moore
Noella Pépin
Dr. Robert Roy
Florence Wilton
Dr. Nick Ardanaz (Chairman)

Appreciation is also extended to the following individuals for their contributions:

Thérèse Goodall
Ramila Schmidt (consultant)

Special thanks are extended to the many teachers, co-ordinators, administrators and parents who greatly assisted the committee by evaluating draft versions of curriculum materials.

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Introduction

Introduction

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for administrators in schools with classes of students who are being instructed in French for a large part of their elementary school program. It is not meant in any way to take the place of the much more detailed handbook for administrators, produced by the Ministry of Education. There are, however, specific areas of concern which are unique to schools with French Immersion programs and this resource book attempts to address itself to these concerns.

1. Staffing

The staffing of an Early French Immersion program is undoubtedly the most important factor in its success.

The French component of the Immersion program should be taught by teachers whose first language is French or by a teacher who has acquired native-like fluency in the French language. In addition to this requirement teachers should have the appropriate training for the age level and program they will be teaching, and must have a sufficient knowledge of English to communicate effectively with colleagues, administrators and parents.

It is advantageous for the teacher responsible for the English component of the Immersion program to have some knowledge of French.

Opportunities for learning assistance and enrichment in the Immersion program should be similar to those in the English program. There could be a bilingual teacher available and capable of handling both English and French aspects of the program or two teachers could each handle one language.

It is advantageous for other personnel involved with the program (i.e. principal, librarian, secretary, aides) to have some knowledge of French and of the basic concept and objectives of the Immersion program. The assistance of bilingual teacher aides is very valuable.

The availability of bilingual personnel makes the program more flexible and enhances the quality of instruction.

Administrators should endeavour at the beginning of the year to establish a list of qualified, fluent, French-speaking substitutes.

Administrators in schools that have both immersion and English classes should be sensitive to the needs of both groups of teachers and should make them feel equal partners in the operation of the school.

2. Scheduling and Time Allotments

Although there are several variations, the following is an example of an appropriate time allocation between the English and French components of the Early Immersion program:

Kindergarten	—	100% instruction in French
Grade One	—	100% instruction in French
Grade Two	—	100% instruction in French
Grade Three	—	80% instruction in French
		20% English language Arts
Grade Four	—	50% instruction in French
		50% instruction in English
Grade Five	—	50% instruction in French
		50% instruction in English
Grade Six	—	50% instruction in French
		50% instruction in English
Grade Seven	—	50% instruction in French
		50% instruction in English

While some districts may decide to increase the percentages of French at the intermediate grades, at no point should less than 50% French be offered.

Note: Although there is no general agreement as to which choice of subjects to be taught in French is more effective, it is felt that continuity from one grade to another within specific subjects is of prime importance. Teacher availability and specific subject knowledge is another factor to be considered in the selection of the subjects to be taught in French.

Whenever possible it is advantageous to team teachers from Years Four through Seven so that one teacher handles the French component and one teacher handles the English component. In this way the students are able to identify one teacher with one language.

The following are suggested alternatives for scheduling:

1) *two week schedule*: during week one, French instruction takes place in the A.M. and English instruction in the P.M.; during week two, the program would be reversed with English instruction in the A.M. and French instruction in the P.M.;

2) *two-day schedule*: on day one, French in the A.M. and English in the P.M.; on day two, English in the A.M. and French in the P.M.;

3) *divide* instructional day equally.

It should be noted that the above scheduling patterns provide blocks of time for sustained instruction in each language.

3. Enrolment of Students

The Early French Immersion program should be available to all children eligible for enrolment in Kindergarten.

Under normal circumstances the last point of entry in an Early Immersion program is at Grade One. Of course, if a child is transferring from an Immersion program in some other part of the province or country, then he/she would enter at grade level. Entry into the program after Year One would be at the discretion of the Principal based on a child's competency in the French language and available space. Administrators should give careful consideration to the number of students starting in the program in order to compensate for the possible attrition.

Class sizes should be determined by the pupil-teacher ratio which governs all other classes in the school district. The French Immersion classes need not necessarily be smaller in order for success to be achieved. Because of the various stages of the acquisition of vocabulary in the second language, split classes should be avoided if possible before grade Four.

4. Administrators of the Program

A) *Curriculum*:

Curriculum guides and authorized materials are available from the Ministry for Early Immersion (K-7) as well as lists indicating supplementary materials, library books and audio-visual materials. Particularly when a new immersion class opens, the administrator should be aware of the need to make available basic and supplementary materials including library books.

B) *Professional development*:

Those responsible within a school district for professional development should include French Immersion in the overall program.

C) *Evaluation of the program*:

Consideration should be given to an ongoing evaluation of the program.

D) *Reporting*:

Reporting practices should be similar in French Immersion and English classes.

Regular communication with the home is especially important for immersion classes as parents are less familiar with the Immersion program than with the English program.

The usual language of reporting is English. However, some schools may wish to adopt bilingual reporting if circumstances permit.

Notes

Early French Immersion *Immersion française précoce*

Annex A

Annex A*

Organizing a French Immersion School

Léon A. Lebrun*
Principal, Alderson Elementary School Coquitlam

The following report is based on the experiences of one school. It is only a descriptive outline and does not pretend to give a rationale for all the decisions that are cited. Hopefully, it can serve as a helpful guide for Principals starting a French Immersion Program in their school.

When organizing for French Immersion classes in an elementary school, the following ought to be addressed:

A. Effects on the school philosophy, policies and/or objectives
B. Bilingualism in the school
C. Types of school organizations
D. Program offerings
E. Staffing
F. Parent Concerns
G. Funding
H. Evaluation and Assessment

Each of the above topics will be briefly discussed to focus *discussion* on the successful implementation of a French Immersion Program in a given school organization.

A. Effects on the school philosophy, policies and/or objectives

Here are a few sample statements that could be added to a school's statement of philosophy and objectives. They speak for themselves.

Philosophy

The bilingual designation of our school compels us to engage in activities which reflect this status of our school. The school will strive to have its pupils acknowledge and appreciate the peaceful coexistence of two dominant languages and cultures (French and English) in their school community. However, no one group will be considered over the other.

*The committee thanks Mr. Lebrun for his valuable contribution. The committee wishes to stress that this one person's experience, and acknowledges the fact that other situations may not parallel that of Mr. Lebrun

Objectives

- to provide pupils with school services in both languages
- English and French programs to be available to all pupils in the school
- French Immersion to be an *option* for those pupils who wish to be enrolled irrespective of ability
- Both languages to be visible and heard in the whole school
- French to be a language option and not a political one.

B. Bilingualism in the School

1. The French staff working with mono-lingual English or non-French speaking staff.

It is important that each staff member should feel free to express themselves in their native language with those staff members who understand them. In other words, there shouldn't be exclusive areas in the school, such as the staff room, where one of the languages is banned, out of fear of offending those who may be within listening range. Common sense and courtesy should reign, not a restrictive directive from the administration. Monolinguals may have difficulty in understanding the need of others to express themselves in their own tongue. They should try to imagine what it's like to search for one's words at all times with one's colleagues, or to always be known as the person who speaks imperfectly or is never completely understood.

Both staff groups should feel they are equal partners in the school. All duties should be shared and leadership should come from both groups.

2. The Support Staff.

It stands to reason that if the support staff (including Principal, secretary, caretakers, etc.) can communicate in both languages the pupils will get more opportunities to use the second language. However, it isn't necessary and indeed French Immersion Programs are thriving without this additional benefit. Perhaps, one should guard against making the school too French for fear that parents will see their neighbourhood school transformed into an exclusively French school, thus creating divisions in the community which go contrary to the purpose of learning about other cultures in our Public Schools. Certainly, the Principal is at an advantage when he can relate to the native French speaker who may be a teacher, parent or pupil in his/her own language. However, this same Principal is required to communicate extremely well in the English language because even the parents who have their children in French immersion do not speak French and need to get clear communication from at least the administration of the school.

3. The Parents.

Reporting to parents is done in English. Our Kindergarten report card is bilingual while the other report cards simply have a place indicating whether or not a given subject was taught in French or English. Also, because at most levels both French and English Language is taught, it has become necessary to devote a section for each Language; that is, the report card includes a French and an English Language Arts Section.

It is perhaps more difficult to make good use of parent classroom volunteers because the majority of parents do not speak French. However, there are several tasks that can be delegated to such volunteers that don't require them to interact with the pupils when French Immersion is in progress.

C. Types of School Organizations

The school which is exclusively French Immersion undoubtedly has the advantage of allowing all school wide communications to be conducted in French. Furthermore, the school is not divided in its objective to promote French at will. The parents are united in what they want for their children. If the school, say, should decide to put on a musical production there can be little doubt about the language in which it will be delivered.

It is surely more difficult to manage a school which offers the regular programs plus French Immersion. However, this type of organization makes it possible to offer the program in a school which is more accessible to the parents. When the program is in several schools, the parents have a choice of school for their children. The school allows for easier mobility from one program to the other. It helps to extinguish the notion that to learn another language one must attend an exclusive institution for all of one's schooling. And, it demonstrates how one might cope in a community where two cultures must coexist. A surprising number of exchanges are made possible at the pupil, staff and parent levels. Perhaps from a Canadian point of view this kind of experience would better equip our pupils to deal with the bilingual bicultural status of our country.

The school organization is further complicated by the introduction of English to the French Immersion program. This is especially true if one avoids assigning subjects taught in English to the French immersion teacher. For example, in year 3, 20% of the program is devoted to English Language Arts. Since the total Language Arts program time is shared by French and English it becomes necessary for the two teachers involved to decide which common skills each one will teach. Also, the released teacher must be assigned to something else which may not conveniently work evenly with the amount of release time. The French Immersion teacher, thus, has to be versatile enough to teach certain subjects in the regular classes. When the program is 50% French and 50% English then two classes can be taught back to back with an English teacher. However,

this can mean that pupils could be exposed to the same teachers over several years. The above has created several challenges which have forced many of us to think in new ways to offer the same curriculum. A solution is always found and enriching experiences often result.

Many will argue that certain subjects are better taught in one language over the other. However, if one can work with the assumption that once pupils have completed year three, they are able, for all intents and purposes, to pursue all of their studies successfully in either languages, then it might be a good idea to alternate on a yearly basis the teaching of certain subjects in English, such as Mathematics and Social Studies.

D. Programs Offerings and Services

1. Learning Assistance

Because French Immersion is offered to all pupils, Learning Assistance must also be provided. This is especially so in the Primary Years. It is an invaluable service which greatly increases the rate of success for pupils. It also provides for diagnostic testing and a second opinion in the placement of pupils. If a pupil requires Learning Assistance in both languages after English is introduced, it may be advisable to consider a switch to straight English because of the limited amount of instruction time in a school day.

2. Enrichment

While learning a second language is in itself enriching, it still does not sufficiently challenge the gifted child who is taking French in a heterogeneous group. Thus ways to challenge these pupils must be sought. These enrichment programs need not be conducted in French if pupils can receive this enrichment by joining another group in the school.

3. E.S.L.

In the case of the French pupil who speaks little English, we at present will enrol him/her in French Immersion along with an E.S.L. component even when the pupil finds him/herself in a 100% French Immersion Program. This provides the French pupils with a natural transition to English while maintaining literacy in their native language.

In the case of new Canadians who speak neither English nor French, it may be advisable to enrol them in the regular program with E.S.L. at least until they can function in English. Probably the ideal solution for these pupils would be to instruct them in their own language along with E.S.L.

4. Outdoor Education

Since the pupils' social contact outside of the classroom is rarely in French it is an experience which is lacking to make their education in French well rounded. Outdoor Education is one of the ways to achieve this. Hopefully, in time, the community will organize many other experiences in French.

5. Cultural Programs

French cultural programs should occur for *all* pupils in the school. Having cultural events, encouraging correspondence, having travel exchanges, bringing in native people are some of the ways to bring about cultural awareness.

6. Curriculum Materials

When choosing curriculum materials the following should be considered:

- The materials should parallel the English materials as much as possible.
- Reading materials chosen should take into account that French remains a second language to the reader. It's only lately that such materials are becoming more available.
- The Language Arts approach should be similar in both languages especially in the earlier years.

E. Staffing

Does a French Immersion Program require additional staff? In a school where both the Regular Program and the French Immersion Program exist, one soon realizes that the P.T.R. based on the total pupil population will not generate enough staff. What one might consider is to look at the school for the most part as two smaller schools, one for French Immersion and one for Regular Programs, and apply the P.T.R. formula accordingly. The main reason for this is due to the fact that we cannot combine the two programs to equalize numbers of pupils at given levels. The other solution is to simply allot more staff based on the varying needs of each school. Unfortunately the latter solution makes it appear that these schools are being staffed more generously than other schools. Two other staffing concerns are Learning Assistance and teacher aides. French Learning Assistance should at least parallel what is offered in the Regular Program. Because the program requires that teachers produce large quantities of class materials, extra teacher aide time becomes a necessity. At the school board level, coordination of French programs must be addressed and may require additional staffing as the program grows. On the whole, one must be prepared to hire some additional staff

when a district offers such a comprehensive alternative as this one. In most cases, it is simply a change of assignment but the Program doesn't entirely replace an existing program and therefore we must assume that additional staff will be required.

What should we be looking for in a French Immersion teacher? The following qualifications would be most desirable:

— competency for the assigned level.

— proficiency in at least one specialty subject which could be taught either to other French Immersion classes or Regular classes.

— should have a background in Linguistics and Second Language teaching.

— given the above, being a French native speaker is definitely an advantage. These teachers bring greater spontaneity to the language. Teachers who have acquired native-like ability in French are of course good candidates. But, in any given school at least some of the teachers should be native to the language and culture.

F. Parent Concerns

1. Cannot help the child at home.

One should stress that the best kind of help to be given to the pupil is much encouragement and school support. Reading for pleasure should be encouraged in both French and English. In other words, the home being a stimulating environment is all that is required.

2. Maintaining standards.

There are enough on-going studies on the subject to reassure parents. However, the use of district assessment tests also helps give assurances. Another possibility that helps reassure parents, as far as the English is concerned, is to mix French Immersion and Regular pupils for the English component of their program in some of the Intermediate years.

3. Changes Without Consultation.

Because French Immersion is in full evolution, frequent adjustments have to be made. It is best that these changes don't come as surprises or "faits accomplis" before consulting with the parents. Most parents who put their children in a program such as this one are very concerned parents and can be very volatile.

4. Favoritism.

Both sets of parents will question why one group is getting something that the other may not be receiving. Being aware that this sort of criticism

is forthcoming makes for more conscicus decision-making in this sensitive part of school operations. Note that any extra funding that a program receives most often benefits the whole school by increasing its resources.

5. Quality of School Produced Materials.

Because it is necessary to produce or adapt great quantities of printed materials in the second language, printed material must be legible. One could be faced with upgrading one's printing or copying system.

6. Percentage of French Taught.

The dramatic drop in French after year three creates many concerns. We can reassure parents that the 50% French will succeed in maintaining a high level of French. However, spontaneity in the language is sacrificed when there are no provisions for 100% French Immersion even for short periods of time (3-6 months every second year).

7. Continuation of the Program.

It is very disconcerting for parents to not know how the program will be maintained throughout their child's schooling. Some measure of long range planning which includes 'what' and 'where' is very helpful.

8. Community Support Programs.

After having enrolled their children in French Immersion, parents are quick to realize that community activities in French would be highly beneficial. Pressure will come on the school to help parents locate such programs.

9. Transportation.

Because the program isn't in every neighbourhood school, transportation and/or car pooling becomes necessary. Special considerations have been given to the coming and going home of these children. Also, when transportation is not supplied by the School Board, it becomes apparent that only those children who live within walking distance or who have parents willing and able to drive them to the school have accessibility to this alternate program. Could it be that some children are missing out just because of transportation problems?

G. Funding

Extra funding is necessary to start up French Immersion in a school. Until it ceases to be a locally developed program, little financing is available from the Provincial Government. Fortunately, we are told that it will be an official Provincial Program by September 1980. Until then, we must purchase our own curriculum materials and it is thanks to the Federal

Support Funds that this is made possible. There still are three other instances that require extra funding:

— Library and resource materials
— Cultural activities
— Teacher aides.

The federal support funds would be better utilized to support these three latter instances.

H. Evaluation and Assessment

Because French Immersion is still a relatively new program, it is under much scrutiny. Thus, there is no let-up to innumerable external and internal evaluation.

Conclusion.

Is it worth it? Of course.

French Immersion provides for a real alternative within the Public Schools. It is an alternative that goes much further than Language acquisition. It, in fact, brings about different approaches to education. It places pupils in real experiences that become meaningful because survival is at stake and at least one objective is clear and put into practise — French.

Early French Immersion Immersion française précoce

Annex B

Annex B*

Research Findings from French Immersion Programs Across Canada: A Parents' Guide

Jim Cummins
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
*Printed by permission of Jim Cummins

Immersion education refers to the use of a language other than the child's home language as a medium of instruction. Fifteen years ago this type of educational program was almost nonexistent in Canada. Today immersion programs are in operation in every province and every major city from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, B.C. The vast majority of these programs use French and English as media of instruction. However, bilingual programs involving a variety of other languages also exist. For example, in Edmonton, Alberta, Ukrainian, German, Hebrew and Cree programs are offered at the elementary level.

The first reaction of many parents to the idea of learning through the medium of a second language is one of incredulity. It is assumed that even if children in an immersion program do become reasonably fluent in French (or whatever the second language is) they will lose out somewhere along the line. Surely, children's achievement in English and other school subjects must suffer when a large proportion of school time is spent through French; some parents also fear that mental confusion will result from the necessity to think through two languages; or, even if logical thinking is unaffected, maybe immersion in a second language environment will stunt the child's spontaneity and power of creative thinking. Other parents wonder what the effects on the child's emotional adjustment will be.

Even parents who are familiar with the general trend of the research results often wonder whether such a program is suitable for *their* child. Are immersion programs suitable only for extremely bright children or can average or below average children benefit just as much? Should children who have speech or language disorders consider enrolling in an immersion program? How about the child who speaks a third (i.e., non-English, non-French) language at home?

Another issue which is sometimes raised is whether or not French immersion programs are equally successful in totally anglophone areas as they are in areas where there is more opportunity to use French out-

side of school (e.g. Montreal, Ottawa). Underlying any discussion of the effects of immersion is the question of how the different program options compare with one another. First, then, it is appropriate to describe the major varieties of French immersion programs which are offered in Canada.

Varieties of French Immersion Programs

Three basic types of French immersion program which aim to develop a high level of bilingualism can be distinguished:

(I) *Early total immersion.* The usual pattern of early total immersion is one where kindergarten and grade 1 are totally through French, one period of English language arts is introduced in grade 2 or 3, leading to approximately 50% of the time through English by grade 5 or 6. Reading is introduced in French.

(II) *Early partial immersion.* Kindergarten is usually through French, grades 1-6 are 50% English, 50% French. Reading is introduced in English.

(III) *Intermediate and late immersion.* Into this category can be grouped a variety of immersion programs which begin after the initial grades of elementary school (i.e., anywhere from grade 3 to grade 12). Late immersion programs (grade 7 up) are favoured by many school boards because they are easier to administer than early immersion programs. Children may or may not have taken regular French-as-second language courses ("core" FSL) before entry.

What are the "pros" and "cons" of each of these basic types of program? Specifically, how do they compare in relation to children's achievement in (a) French, (b) English, (c) other subjects, (d) intellectual development, (e) emotional and attitudinal development. To what extent are each of the programs suitable for all children?

French Achievement

Evaluations have shown that each of the three basic program types can be an effective route to bilingualism and, in terms of French achievement, it is not clear whether one program type is superior to the others.

It has been consistently found that by the end of elementary school early total immersion students approach native-like levels in French listening comprehension and reading skills, although they are still clearly distinguishable from native francophones in speaking and writing skills. This is not surprising since their only source of French language input is the teacher. Sustained interaction with native francophone children appears to be necessary to develop native-like speaking abilities. This can be seen in the fact that English-speaking children in francophone schools in

Montreal are judged by their teachers to be almost indistinguishable from their francophone classmates in terms of French fluency, pronunciation and accent.

Comparisons of the French achievement of early total and partial immersion students show inconsistent findings. Students in a partial immersion program in Southern Ontario were found to gain proficiency in French considerably more slowly than total immersion students. However, the evaluation of the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board (ORCSSB) partial immersion program shows that, by grade 4, students' French proficiency is almost equivalent to that of their peers in total immersion. In this program each day is divided into morning and afternoon halves, one taught in English and the other in French by different teachers.

Recent comparisons of the French achievement of children in early total immersion and late immersion programs show somewhat surprising results. For example, it has been found in Montreal that children who have had six years of core French in elementary school and who enter an intensive grade 7 immersion program (80% French in grade 7 and 8) perform as well in listening, speaking, reading and writing French at the end of grade 8 as grade 8 children who have gone through an early total immersion program. Evaluations in Ontario confirm the viability of late immersion. Grade 10 students in a less intensive form of late immersion program starting at grade 8, who have 1400 hours of cumulated instruction, perform better in listening comprehension, reading and writing, than grade 6 students in early total immersion who have had almost four times as many hours cumulative instruction.

These findings appear surprising because of the widespread belief that the younger child is a better language learner. Many recent studies show clearly that this widespread belief is a myth. Older children have been found to make much more rapid progress than younger children in acquiring most aspects of second language proficiency. An exception to this is the area of accent where younger children appear to have an advantage. The reason older children progress more rapidly in other aspects of second language learning is because of their greater intellectual maturity. Performance in the academic second language skills measured by most standardized tests is strongly related to overall intellectual level, and thus it is not surprising that older children should display an advantage on these measures. It is not possible to tell from comparisons to date whether or not late immersion students are as proficient as early immersion students in French interpersonal communication skills in "real life" situations. However, the further development of these skills is likely to depend more on children's use of French outside the school context than in the classroom situation, once a certain level of French proficiency has been attained. Thus, there is little reason to expect that late immersion students will be any less proficient than early immersion students in French interpersonal communication by the end of secondary school.

English Achievement

In early total immersion programs there are temporary lags in some aspects of English skills until formal English instruction is introduced. When English language arts is introduced, immersion students catch up to children in regular programs very rapidly, suggesting that considerable transfer of language skills takes place from French to English. It usually takes longer for children to catch up in the technical aspects of English skills, e.g. capitalization, spelling, etc., where the lag may persist until grade 3 or 4. However, it has been found in some evaluations that, despite the early lags, children in early immersion programs tend to perform *better* than children in regular programs on several aspects of English achievement by the end of elementary school.

In most early partial immersion programs little or no delay has been noted in the development of English language skills. Studies conducted within the context of partial immersion programs have also found differences in English language skills in favour of immersion students. However, the extent of beneficial effects on English may be a function of amount of French students have learned. This is suggested by a study conducted in the Edmonton Public School System partial immersion program which compared grade 3 high French achievers, low French achievers, and regular program students on a series of English language processing tasks. The three groups had similar academic potential at the kindergarten level, but by grade 3 those children who had developed high levels of French proficiency also performed significantly better than the other two groups on several measures of English language processing.

In late immersion programs no differences have appeared between immersion and regular program students in English academic skills. However, less research has been conducted on this late immersion than in early immersion programs and the possibility of subtle benefits should not be ruled out.

These results have two interesting implications. First, at least among middle-class anglophone children, the influence of schools on the development of English language skills appears to be less than was hitherto assumed. This is most convincingly illustrated in the study of anglophone children attending francophone schools in Montreal mentioned earlier. Despite the fact that for many children English language arts was not introduced until grade 5, children performed as well on measures of English achievement as comparable children in regular English schools. It appears that skills learnt through a second language can be easily transferred to the child's native language. Also, the main ingredient in the development of fluent reading comprehension is the vocabulary knowledge of the child which is much more dependent on the child's environment outside the school (e.g. literacy level of the home) than it is on school factors.

The relevance of these results lies in the fact that in the past, some parents have opted for a partial immersion program rather than total immersion program because of fears regarding their child's English development. These fears appear to have little basis. The greater exposure to French in early total immersion has no detrimental effects on children's achievement in English.

The second implication is that it may be possible to devise teaching methods and programs which would exploit the child's knowledge of two languages. The research results showing a tendency for the immersion students to perform better on aspects of English skills are consistent with the results of a considerable number of studies which suggest that there may be some cognitive advantages associated with attaining high levels of competence in two languages. For example, it has been reported in several studies that bilingual children are better able to analyze aspects of language in comparison to unilingual children. It would not be at all surprising if this were the case in view of the enormous amount of analyzing and processing of language that must be involved in becoming bilingual. One possible explanation which has been suggested to account for the superior performance of bilingual children on some language tasks is that, as they acquire more proficiency in their second language, they begin to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality, e.g. word orders, grammatical structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. In other words, knowledge of a second language may help bring into focus aspects of children's first language of which they might otherwise be unaware. However, not all children in immersion programs are likely to engage in this form of contrastive analysis to the same extent. Some may do it consciously and explicitly, others not at all. Thus, there may be considerable potential for parents and teachers to devise means of encouraging children to become aware of similarities and differences in the ways in which they use French and English to express their thoughts. This type of approach might increase children's understanding of how language itself works. The ability and motivation to engage in this form of contrastive analysis is likely to be partially a function of the level of French competence which a child has attained.

Achievement in Other Subjects

Students in early total immersion programs have tended to perform as well as comparison groups in all school subjects other than English or French. In addition, they are able to transfer their knowledge from one language to the other. For example, when mathematics is taught through French, early immersion students perform equally well whether tested in English or French.

In one early partial immersion program in Ontario there were several instances of poorer performance in subject matter taught through French, especially in the later grades of elementary school. For example, the

grade 6 students did not perform as well as their English-educated peers in either science or mathematics, possibly, as Merrill Swain suggests, because "their level of French was not adequate to deal with the more sophisticated level of mathematical and scientific concepts being presented to them in French."

By contrast, in the Ottawa partial immersion program, students have performed as well as comparison groups in all academic subjects. However, as noted earlier, students' French proficiency in the Ottawa program is almost as well-developed as that of early total immersion students.

In late immersion programs some temporary lags in subject matter taught through French have been experienced but in no case has the difficulty been long-term. Usually, by the end of the second year of the program, students have caught up with their regular program peers in all subjects taught through French. There is some evidence that a relatively high degree of motivation may be necessary among late immersion students in order to "keep up" in subjects taught through French. This may be because due to the greater abstractness of curriculum content at this stage the "language barrier" is very evident whereas younger early immersion students "have overcome the language barrier before they even knew it existed" (H.H. Stern). Thus, although late immersion programs have been highly successful among students who are willing to work exceptionnally hard, early immersion programs may be a more viable proposition for a larger number of students.

Intellectual Development

There has been no evidence that immersion programs have any negative effects on children's intellectual or creative development. Any differences that have been found have tended to favour children in immersion programs.

Emotional and Attitudinal Development

Studies have shown no evidence of any problems in emotional or social adjustment among students in any of the different types of immersion program. Children's introduction to early immersion programs is "gentle" in that they continue to express themselves in English in kindergarten — only the teacher speaks French. This experience builds up sufficient listening comprehension in French that when academic content is introduced in grade 1, children have little difficulty in following what is going on.

Studies of children's attitudes towards francophones have shown that children in immersion programs continue to maintain strong feelings of identity with the anglophone group but they perceive less "psycho-

logical distance" separating themselves and francophone children than do children in regular programs.

How Successful Is Immersion in Totally Anglophone Areas?

Intuitively one might expect immersion to be more successful in bilingual cities such as Montreal or Ottawa-Hull than in totally unilingual areas. However, this does not appear to be the case. Evaluations have shown quite clearly that immersion programs can be highly successful anywhere in Canada. The reason why a bilingual location does not appear to confer any advantage is that, for the most part, children in immersion programs use little or no French outside of school. The only television programs they are likely to watch on the French channel are hockey games (when there are none on the English channel) or Saturday morning cartoons. In both these cases the visual image is to a large extent independent of the verbal accompaniment. However, studies have shown that although children in immersion programs tend not to actively seek out opportunities to use French outside of school, they feel relatively comfortable in situations where they are required to use French. In contrast, children in core FSL programs tend to feel threatened by such situations.

In summary, a major reason why immersion works just as well in a unilingual as compared to a bilingual environment is that students in immersion programs tend to make relatively little use of opportunities for using French outside the classroom. It is possible that highly motivated students in high school (who have been in either an early or late immersion program) may make more effort to use French outside of school if they perceive knowledge of French as playing a useful or desirable role in their life plans.

Are Immersion Programs Suitable for All Children?

There is no more reason to expect immersion programs to be the best possible educational program for all children than there is to expect regular English programs to be. However, despite a considerable number of studies addressed to the issue, research to date has failed to identify any category of student for whom immersion programs are not suitable.

Intelligence: Immersion programs are certainly *not* just for the very bright. Studies have consistently shown that although IQ is strongly related to the development of reading and writing skills in both early and late French immersion programs (as in regular programs), it is much less related to the development of French speaking skills. In other words,

children of relatively low IQ develop as much fluency in French as high IQ children. Although this finding may appear surprising at first sight, it makes a lot of sense when one realizes that the immersion experience is designed to mimic the process through which children learned their first language. Except in the case of some severly retarded or autistic children, virtually all children learn to communicate in their first language, irrespective of level of intelligence. Thus, there is no reason to expect that the acquisition of second language speaking skills in a French immersion program should be determined by a child's level of intelligence.

Home Background: It has also been found that children from working-class backgrounds and those who speak a third language at home appear to do well in immersion. In fact there is some evidence that children from certain linguistic backgrounds (e.g. Italian) may have an advantage in learning French because of the similarity between languages.

Motivation: As mentioned previously, a high level of motivation to learn French is probably a prerequisite for success in late immersion programs. This does not of course mean that a high level of motivation is not necessary in early immersion programs. It is; however, one can assume high motivation more easily at the kindergarten and grade 1 levels than one can in junior high and high school. The relatively concrete nature of the curriculum at the younger age level provides children with a "breather" in which to acquire sufficient French skills to master academic content; however, at the older age level students must be motivated to work extremely hard to overcome the language barrier and master the complex curriculum content being presented through French. Thus, late immersion programs may be suitable only for children who are motivated to work extra hard to succeed.

Learning Disabilities: It has been suggested by Dr. Ronald Trites of the Neuropsychological Laboratory at the Royal Ottawa Hospital that some children are more predisposed to develop learning disabilities in early immersion programs than they would be in a regular English program. Other researchers have not found Dr. Trites' evidence convincing. Dr. Maggie Bruck of the Montreal McGill Children's Hospital has conducted an extensive longitudinal study of children with language disabilities in early French immersion. She has found that these children do as well in immersion as comparable children in regular programs. In addition, they acquire fluent French skills. It is interesting to note that language disabled children experience considerable difficulty in core FSL courses. Some of the reasons which have been suggested to explain why these children perform relatively well in early total French immersion are (a) reading skills may be easier to acquire in French since sound-symbol relationships are more systematic in French than in English; (b) the language disabled child's self-esteem may be boosted by the fact that s/he is acquiring fluent French skills, something that other siblings or peers may not have.

In summary, it is still an open question as to whether or not early French immersion programs are suitable for all children. However, research to

date has provided no evidence that they are not. Late immersion programs may be less suited for all children because of the high level of motivation necessary to overcome the language barrier.

Should Children Who Experience Learning Problems in Early French Immersion Transfer out or Remain in? Here again Dr. Trites and Dr. Bruck take opposing views. Dr. Trites argues that children who experience difficulties should be switched to an English program whereas Dr. Bruck suggests that the disadvantages associated with such a switch will usually far outweigh any benefits. Dr. Trites' case is weakened by the detailed statistical analyses in his report (Trites and Price, 1977) to the Ontario Ministry of Education. These analyses indicate that a large majority of children who switched to an English program repeated or dropped back a grade level, and, although they made good progress in reading and other subjects *in relation to the grade level which they repeated*, they fell further behind equivalent children who remained in French immersion in terms of the level of performance that would be expected on the basis of their age.

However, in statistical analyses it is easy to lose sight of the individual child and it is important to emphasize that when children encounter difficulties in French immersion, each case must be judged on its individual merits. What researchers can do is suggest some of the potentially important factors which should be considered by those who are responsible for deciding whether or not to transfer a child to an English program.

1. Parents and teachers should not assume that the French immersion program is to blame for a child's learning problems. There is no greater incidence of learning disability in French immersion than in regular programs and Dr. Bruck's evidence would suggest that children with problems in immersion would likely have experienced the same problems in a regular English program.

2. If a child has been unhappy for a prolonged period of time in an immersion program and wants to switch, then it is probably right to do so. However, one should consider the reasons for the child's unhappiness. If the child's relationship with a particular teacher is the source of the problem and the school year is almost finished, then transfer may not be necessary.

3. Transfer to an English program may damage a child's self-image and the stigma of failure may compound the learning problems.

4. When a child transfers to an English program in the early grades of elementary school, s/he will probably be even further behind than in the immersion program because of not having had any formal English instruction. Teachers in the regular program may resent the extra work which transferred children represent and thus harmonious learning relationships may be difficult to establish.

5. Despite problems in academic subjects, the child experiencing learning difficulties in immersion will usually be developing relatively fluent French speaking skills. Not only is this likely to boost his or her self-esteem since siblings or parents may not have acquired French, but it also represents an asset which will enhance future chances of personal satisfaction and economic success in present-day Canada. Immersion may be the only means through which such a child can acquire facility in French since s/he is likely to have the same difficulty in a core FSL program as s/he does in other academic subjects.

Thus, there are a number of factors to consider, and teachers and parents should not assume that a child who experiences difficulties in French immersion would necessarily be better off in a regular program. A sizeable proportion of children experience academic difficulties in any type of school program. Teachers must accept the fact that children in immersion programs also experience their share of difficulties, and they should individualize their program accordingly, rather than automatically taking the easy way out by transferring children to the regular program.

Further Information

1. *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* (1979) A handbook for parents produced by Canadian Parents for French. Available from Canadian Parents for French, Terminal P.O. Box 8470, Ottawa, Ontario, K1G 3H6.

2. Seven special issues of the *Canadian Modern Language Review* have been published with financial assistance from the Secretary of State. These special issues deal with current Canadian research on immersion education and second language learning. The volumes still in print can be obtained free of charge from

   The Canadian Modern Language Review
   4 Oakmount Road
   Welland, Ontario L3C 4X8

   (i) Bilingualism in Education (out of print)
   (ii) Attitude and Motivation in Language Learning
   (iii) Immersion Education for the Majority Child
   (iv) Alternative Programs for Teaching French as a second Language in the Schools of the Carleton and Ottawa School Boards (out of print)
   (v) Needs Oriented Language Teaching
   (vi) Language Acquisition and Bilingualism in Education
   (vii) Proceedings of the First ACPI/CAIT Conference

Notes

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